

From: Office of the Governor Site Support  
Sent: 7/29/2015 10:49:22 AM  
To: Haley, Nikki  
Cc:  
Subject: Support EHB Coverage of Obesity Treatment Services

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Nina Crowley  
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July 29, 2015

1205 Pendleton Street  
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Dear Governor Haley,

As someone who is affected by obesity, as a bariatric surgery dietitian in Charleston SC, providing treatment for this chronic disease, I urge you to support fair and equal coverage of evidence-based and medically necessary obesity treatment services within the state health exchange essential health benefit package. Recently, the National Council of Insurance Legislators also agreed upon a Resolution in Support of Efforts to Reduce the Incidence of Obesity and Chronic Disease that urges states to take the following measures:

" Encourage states that operate their own exchanges or those with federal-state partnership exchanges to consider the selection of benchmark plans that allow for access to the entire range of treatment options for wellness and preventive policies, including treatments for obesity such as pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery;

" Encourage the implementation of Chronic Disease Management Programs (CDMPs) in state Medicaid and other state health programs, or to seek out other sources of program funding for CDMPs, such as grants or other public or private funding programs, that emphasize the management of obesity, including coverage of the full range of obesity treatments, particularly new innovative treatments such as pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery;

" Encourage state exchanges to incentivize Qualified Health Plans to include coverage of the full spectrum of obesity treatments or to implement CDMPs that include the full range of obesity treatments, including new innovative measures such as pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery.

Just as those affected by heart disease receive their care through a coordinated multidisciplinary

treatment team, those affected by obesity should also follow a similar continuum of coordinated care. Because of the complex nature of obesity and its variety of impacts on both physical and mental health, effective treatment requires the coordinated services of providers from several disciplines and professions (both physician and non-physician) within both of these treatment areas.

It was for these reasons in 2013 that the American Medical Association (AMA) adopted formal policy designating obesity as a disease and why the AMA supports patient access to the full continuum of care of evidence-based obesity treatment modalities such as behavioral, pharmaceutical, psychosocial, nutritional, and surgical interventions.

In short, we need to start treating obesity seriously, at both the healthcare and policy level. I'm hopeful that you will utilize your position in the legislature to follow the guidance issued by the NCOIL resolution and introduce legislation that supports coverage of obesity treatment services under the state health exchange EHB package. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,  
Nina Crowley